

TOEFL Junior : Reading Comprehension Test 2

Read the passage . 60 - 100 minutes

Nobel Prize in Chemistry

Marie Curie was one of the most accomplished scientists in history. Together with her husband, Pierre, she discovered radium, an element widely used for treating cancer, and studied uranium and other radioactive substances. Pierre and Marie's amicable collaboration later helped to unlock the secrets of the atom.

Marie was born in 1867 in Warsaw, Poland, where her father was a professor of physics. At an early age, she displayed a brilliant mind and a blithe personality. Her great exuberance for learning prompted her to continue with her studies after high school. She became disgruntled, however, when she learned that the university in Warsaw was closed to women. Determined to receive a higher education, she defiantly left Poland and in 1891 entered the Sorbonne, a French university, where she earned her master's degree and doctorate in physics.

Marie was fortunate to have studied at the Sorbonne with some of the greatest scientists of her day, one of whom was Pierre Curie. Marie and Pierre were married in 1895 and spent many productive years working together in the physics laboratory. A short time after they discovered radium, Pierre was killed by a horse-drawn wagon in 1906. Marie was stunned by this horrible misfortune and endured heartbreaking anguish. Despondently she recalled their close relationship and the joy that they had shared in scientific research. The fact that she had two young daughters to raise by herself greatly increased her distress.

Curie's feeling of desolation finally began to fade when she was asked to succeed her husband as a physics professor at the Sorbonne. She was the first woman to be given a professorship at the world-famous university. In 1911 she received the Nobel Prize in chemistry for isolating radium. Although Marie Curie eventually suffered a fatal illness from her long exposure to radium, she never became disillusioned about her work. Regardless of the consequences, she had dedicated herself to science and to revealing the mysteries of the physical world.

INSTRUCTION:

Read the questions carefully and refer to the text above then choose the best answer:

1. The Curies' _____ collaboration helped to unlock the secrets of the atom.

- A. friendly
- B. competitive
- C. courteous
- D. industrious
- E. chemistry

2. Marie had a bright mind and a _____ personality.

- A. strong
- B. lighthearted
- C. humorous
- D. strange
- E. envious

3. When she learned that she could not attend the university in Warsaw, she felt _____.

- A. hopeless
- B. annoyed
- C. depressed
- D. worried
- E. None of the above

4. Marie _____ by leaving Poland and traveling to France to enter the Sorbonne.

- A. challenged authority
- B. showed intelligence
- C. behaved
- D. was distressed
- E. Answer not available

5. _____ she remembered their joy together.

- A. Dejectedly
- B. Worried
- C. Tearfully
- D. Happily
- E. Irefully

6. Her _____ began to fade when she returned to the Sorbonne to succeed her husband.

- A. misfortune
- B. anger
- C. wretchedness
- D. disappointment
- E. ambition

7. Even though she became fatally ill from working with radium, Marie Curie was never _____.

- A. troubled
- B. worried
- C. disappointed
- D. sorrowful
- E. disturbed

Answers and Explanations

- 1. A:** "Amicable" means friendly. It does not mean competitive (B), i.e. oppositional, ambitious, or aggressive; courteous (C), i.e. polite; industrious (D), i.e. hard-working; or chemistry (E): their collaboration was in physics, but moreover, the passage specifically describes their collaboration as "amicable."
- 2. B:** "Blithe" means light-hearted. It does not mean strong (A), humorous (B) or funny; strange (D), or envious (E).
- 3. B:** "Disgruntled" means annoyed. It does not mean hopeless (A), depressed (C), or worried (D).
- 4. A:** Marie challenged authority by going to study at the Sorbonne, because Warsaw's university did not admit women. The passage indicates this challenge by describing her "defiantly" leaving Poland for France; i.e., she was defying authority. The passage does not indicate she showed intelligence (B), "behaved" (C), or was distressed (D) or upset by her move.
- 5. A:** A synonym for "despondently" is "dejectedly," meaning sadly, with despair or depression. The passage indicates this by describing Curie's emotional state as one of "heartbreaking anguish" over her husband's sudden accidental death. She is not described in this passage as worried (B) by her memories, or recalling them tearfully (C), happily (D), or irefully (E), i.e. angrily.
- 6. C:** The closest synonym for the "feeling of desolation" (despair) described in the passage is wretchedness. Misfortune (A) or ill fate/luck is not as close. Anger (B) is a separate emotion from desolation. Disappointment (D) is also different from desolation, meaning feeling let-down rather than hopeless. Ambition (E) is drive to succeed or accomplish things. It was not Curie's ambition that faded upon returning to the Sorbonne but her depression.
- 7. C:** "Disillusioned" means disappointed. It does not mean troubled (A), i.e. concerned or disturbed; worried (B) or anxious; sorrowful (D) or sad; or disturbed (E).